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Brenton, Edward Pelham

A letter to the
Rt. Hon. R.W. Horton
London

[1830]

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George Gordon Byron
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LETTER

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TO THE

RT. HON. R. W. HORTON,

SHEWING THE

IMPOLICY, INEFFICACY, AND RUINOUS
CONSEQUENCES

OF

EMIGRATION,

3000

AND THE

ADVANTAGES OF HOME COLONIES,

BY

EDW. P. BRENTON, Esq. CAPT. R.N.

AUTHOR OF "THE NAVAL HISTORY OF GREAT BRITAIN."

"In the multitude of the people is the king's honor, but in the
want of the people is the destruction of the prince."
Prov. c. xiv. v. 28.

LONDON :

C. RICE, MOUNT STREET, BERKELEY SQUARE.

1831

Price One Shilling:—the Profits are for the benefit of the
"Royal Patriotic Association."

PREFACE.

THE following pages are a continuation of a series of letters which I have addressed to the Public, in various forms, since the beginning of April last. The burthen of them is, profitable employment for the unemployed (falsely called redundant) population ; the term is in itself absurd, and will continue to be so, until it has been proved that human labour will not produce as much food in the land as the people can consume. Excepting in cases of dearth, experience convinces us that this has never happened ; and, according to the beneficent plans by which the Almighty has hitherto governed the world, it never will. Our danger lies in disregarding His laws, and in our ingratitude for his mercies : the care of the poor is, next to divine worship, our greatest duty, and even selfishness points it out to our attention. The voice of reason and humanity is at length heard in the land ; and as I predicted, the late tumults have

produced a monitory effect, and we should lay it to heart: we are not sent into the world to indulge in sloth and luxury, while a large portion of our fellow-creatures are in misery and want. And although much of what bears the semblance of wretchedness is fictitious, still there is too much of the reality for any thinking man to be an indifferent spectator; I therefore earnestly call on all who have the leisure to come forward;—let them remember that “the voice of the people is the voice of God,”—that it is our duty to assist each other; and that in due time we shall reap if we faint not.

To the living authors of the following publications I return my best thanks for the valuable information they have afforded me: the whole of the works may be read with advantage by every person whose time is their own.

- 1 Letter to the Marquess of Salisbury, by the Rev. S. Demainbray.
- 2 Address to the Governors and Directors of the Public Charity Schools, by Montagu Burgoyne, Esq.; Letter to Right Hon. Sturges Bourne, by Ditto.
- 3 Britton Abbott's Cottage and Garden.*
- 4 Probable Effects of the Allotment System upon the Agricultural Labourers.
- 5 Facts, by Thos. H. Willis, St. John's Wood-terrace; Hints on Poor's Rates, by Ditto.
- 6 Plan of Relief for Unemployed Poor, by H. M'Cormac.
- 7 Correspondences of the Right Hon. R. Wilmot Horton, and Mechanics' Institute.
- 8 Machine Breaking, village of Turvey Down.
- 9 Rev. Edward Field's Address to the Inhabitants of Keddington.
- 10 Colonies at Home, by W. Allen, F.R.S.
- 11 Antipauper System, by the Rev. J. T. Becker.
- 12 Letter to the President of Bridewell Hospital from a Governor.
- 13 Defence of the English Poor Laws, by a Select Vestryman.
- 14 Dessèchement des Marais de la Linth: Geneva,—supposed to be Fellenberg's.
- 15 Exposé: Institutions de Bienfaisance pour les Pauvres dans les Pays Bas.
- 16 Fry of Carlisle's Address to the Co-operatives.
- 17 Philanthropic Magazine.
- 18 Letter to the Lord Chancellor Brougham and Vaux, by W. Herbert Saunders, Esq. of Richmond.
- 19 M'Farlane's Enquiry concerning the Poor, Edinburgh, 1782.

* Out of Print.

- 20 Remarks on the present Distresses of the Poor, by the Lord Bishop of Bath and Wells.
- 21 England's Improvement by Sea and Land, by Andr. Yarranton, Gent., London, 1677.*
- 22 Practice opposed to Theory, or an Enquiry into the causes of Commercial Distress, by a Practical Man.
- 23 Thoughts on Wages, addressed to the Agriculturalists.
- 24 Manual of Cottage Gardening, by J. C. Loudon.
- 25 Evidence before the third Emigration Committee of the House of Commons on the Poor Laws, 1817; by Mr. Thomas Wright, 74, West Smithfield.
- 26 The Working Man's Companion.—Results of Machinery.
- 27 Beneficial Effects of Allotments to Cottagers, at Saffron Walden, in Essex.—Lord Braybrooke's Plans.—Cambridge Journal, 28th January, 1831.
- 28 A Plain Statement of the Case of the Labourer.

The Author has also to offer his thanks to Mr. Thomas Gray of Nottingham, for his kind communication, and also to his numerous anonymous correspondents, whom he would recommend to affix some sort of signature, by which their letters may be known and acknowledged.

* Out of Print.

LETTER,

&c. &c.

*Extract from the Speech of the Right Hon. R. W. HORTON,
to the Class at the Mechanics' Institute.*

“If a system of Home Colonization were carried into effect, how would it be possible to prevent the Home Colonists from still throwing their labour upon the Home market, as the Irish labourers do at present, and thus creating that glut of labour in the market, which it was the object of all to remove?”—*Times*, January 28, 1831.

SIR,

IN “The Times” newspaper of Thursday the 20th, I read the following words, attributed to you in an address to the members of the Mechanics’ Institute;—“1st. Have we a surplus population in a state of destitution? 2nd. Have we the means of providing for that surplus population by colonization? And 3rd. Are there any other means of providing for that population at home, preferable to the expedient of their colonization abroad?”—I shall proceed to answer you as I promised in a short letter which the Editor of “The Times” was so obliging as to insert in his paper of January 22.

To your first question I say that *there is no surplus population*; that the term itself has no meaning; and that if it were true, it would be one of the mysteries which human wisdom could not unravel. That there are many people in the country, unemployed, and in a state of destitution, I grant; but that there are means of employing them *all* in profitable labour is equally clear; and that these means should be resorted to before the cruel expedient is tried of transporting them to cold, inhospitable regions—to starve on the sea shore, or beg their bread among the negroes, and crowded population of New York, as has been the case. If a man were about to settle a colony in Africa, America, or New Holland, what would be the essentials for his undertaking? Men, money, and land!!! We have all three in this country, without incurring the risk or expense of a long voyage; without severing the ties of affection between man and man, or between an Englishman and his beloved country. Here, if he were settled in the waste lands of Sussex or Hampshire, all his wants might not only be supplied in twenty-four hours, but, in supplying these wants, he actually administers to the wants of his fellow-creatures; does he require tools, clothing, seed, plants, or any other article, he has not only an abundant supply at his door, but the more he is able to take of them, the more is his country enriched, and the happier the

people. Settle the same man in Africa, or any other foreign country, and he is at once cut off from all these resources, and, by a voluntary abdication of his country, is unnecessarily reduced to the state of Robinson Crusoe; deprived of the consolation of religion or of friends, of medical aid, and of every human enjoyment. The expense and length of the voyage have exhausted his health and strength; some of his family have probably sunk under grief and the pain of separation; he is a forlorn and helpless wanderer in a savage, though perhaps a fruitful wilderness, cursing the authors of his calamity:—it is possible, however, that some may surmount this ordeal, and rear a family of white savages like the back woodsmen of America. If you are still sceptical as to the means of providing for the unemployed poor at home, (for I will never admit the term "*surplus*" to be applied to them, any more than I would say, the surplus applicants for admission to the Athenæum or United Service Clubs) I will furnish you with some instances, which you can verify, either by ocular demonstration or by letter. At Torquay, in Devonshire, Mr. Garrett has employed sixty labourers (who were out of work) on patches of land; and these men have now for two years maintained their families, and kept themselves, without any parochial aid whatever. The Rev. S. Demainbray of Richmond will furnish you with a similar instance.

The Bishops of London and of Bath and Wells have tried the experiment with success; so have the Lords Suffield, Brownlow, and Braybroke, and Mr. Allen of Linfield, with many others;—nor can it be doubted that the land of Great Britain is capable of supporting three times the number of its present population. You speak of Frome and Bennenden; but I do not think the actors in those scenes will thank you for reviving the subject: at Frome they owned that they had in three years expended (squandered) the sum of £23,000 on the poor, without bringing any return—more shame for them: £23,000, if it had been properly expended in the building of cottages and the cultivation of waste land, ought to have found work and clothing for all the unemployed poor in the county of Somerset. With respect to the instance of Bennenden, I happen to have had some conversation with Mr. Hodges on that subject, and I lamented at the time that a man so truly amiable, so humane and kind-hearted, should have been induced to throw away his money in sending our best yeomanry out of the country, and thus adding to the strength of our rivals—when that same money would have enabled them to have lived happily at home. Should this system be persevered in for a few years, the atrophy will be incurable; the best men will have added to the ranks of our enemies, the worst will be left to convert the whole mass into beggary and despair. The

shopkeeper will have lost his customer, the king his taxes, and the nation its sinews. Then welcome invaders from the Baltic, to drive the Britons again to the mountains of Wales and Scotland!

Allow me now, Sir, to ask you what you mean by an “extensive and well conducted system of colonization?”—By “extensive” do you mean 10,000, 100,000 or 1,000,000? The first and second numbers, if your conjectures be true, would be a mere drop in the sea as to any relief; and the third would take more than all the tonnage of the empire to set it afloat. A ship of 500 tons could not convey, with any regard to decency, more than 200 people. Slaves and convicts, I know, are made to stow closer; if this be the case, then it would require 2,500,000 tons to convey one million people, no matter where; the cost of conveyance thirty millions; and the value of money and goods taken with them at least twice as much more. After this mighty effort all other trades must stand still, and in the vast depletion, I much doubt whether the national pulse would ever rise again to a healthy action. At the same time, allow me to say, that such gentlemen as may have land to settle, either in Canada or New Holland, may find this a very profitable speculation; *they* will incur no risk, *they* care not how many die on the voyage—they only want to let or to cultivate their lands with the hands that may be found able to work when they arrive out. I can prove that a family of six people may

be settled in England with £52, and would, if followed up and attended to, be entirely free yeomanry in two years, without any debt being incurred, *never to be repaid*. You, on the other hand, demand £80 for each family, with which you mean to settle them in Canada or New Holland—no matter where. The money will be repaid with “the fore-top-sail,” which in our profession means never.

But, Sir, let me suppose for one moment, that your plan (which God of his infinite mercy forbid) should be sanctioned by the legislature, and your transports or ships of war lined the Thames, and crowded the Mother-bank, all ready to depart—who do you mean to select for this hopeful speculation? The lame, the halt, the blind, the infant—the decrepid? No, not one of these; on the contrary, every one of your voluntary deported will be the very pride of our population; not idle beggars, but hardy, enterprising and industrious men—leaving us at home, to pay double taxes and poor rates, to supply the vacuum made by your emigrants; and should these unhappy people arrive safe and prosper, think you that they would retain their allegiance to their mother country?—You cannot think so, for you are a man of sense and education, and you *know* that they would, at no distant day, become our bitterest enemies. You know that I have combatted this fatal delusion of yours before—you have read my letter to the

Mendicity Society, and my address to the Select Vestry of St. Mary-le-bone. You may affect to be ignorant of them, but I defy you to overthrow my conclusions, which are founded on Scripture, and supported by facts, numerous, clear, and palpable.

You quote with great fluency the reports of the Emigration Committee, and, with all due respect, I laugh at them: for this plain reason, that the examination is generally conducted by leading questions; so that a poor man, awed and confused before an assembly of the great men of the land, is compelled, as it were, to return such answers as his examiners wish. It is, moreover, a dreadful truth, that the very basis of your arguments, and the cause of that committee being so assembled, is founded on a mistrust of Providence, and a silent denial, or rejection, of the blessing pronounced on Abraham, that his posterity should be “as the stars of heaven, and as the sand upon the seashore.” (Gen. xxii. 17.) Would the Almighty have given this boon as a mark of his favour, if it could ever have been converted to a curse? Where, in ancient or modern history, have you ever heard of *over population*? unless it were produced by the folly, the wickedness, and the covetousness of man. “Clearing a country,”—enclosing commons to grow corn, and driving away the peasant and his cow, and his pig, and his bee-hive, his cradle, and his little happy establishment,—penning them all up in the close and fetid atmosphere of a work-

louse, destructive at once of health and of morals --is, I own, creating an over-population in one place at the expense of another ; but if that over-population had been fairly and honestly employed on the land, instead of being driven to seek refuge in manufactories, we should not have heard the miscreant cry of "Dreadful havoc in trade;" it ought to be "dreadful havoc in human beings, dreadful havoc in morals, in religion, in common honesty, in fair dealing, in justice, in humanity." Could this "dreadful havoc in trade" have happened, if the labourer had received the fair value of his labour? What said that worthy, upright, and honest tradesman, Mr. Thos. Wright, of West Smithfield, before the committee of the House of Commons? (one of your emigration committees) did he not tell you that you were all wrong, and did you believe him? did he not shew you a curry-comb, and tell you the cost of the manufacture, and what it was to fetch by retail—and was not the difference 3000 per cent?—that is, the prime cost one penny, the retail 2s. 6d.!!! Did the poor labourer get any of this profit? no; he was content with the bare miserable pittance to keep body and soul together. When the wretched fanatics conspire to destroy machinery, we ought to deplore their ignorance rather than blame it. You propose to supply the want of labour by machinery; and these poor ignorant people are unable to make the distinction between the

machinery that enriches the few at the expense of the many, and the machinery that comes in aid of human labour: they see the corn threshed out and prepared for market by machinery, while they are employed at 4s. or 3s. 6d. a week, and with that pittance are unable to obtain as much *food only* as will satisfy nature. How would a well-informed man reason, upon being placed in the same situation? I am the last person in the world to excite the poor to contempt of the laws; their only hope of safety and prosperity, under the guidance of the Almighty, is obedience and order; this being established, it is the duty, and the first duty, as well as the interest, of every Government, to devote its attention to the improvement of their condition, and this is far more easy than may at first sight appear:—apply the waste labour to the waste land; and let the funds which are given to the poor in money for unproductive labour, be paid to them for doing that which will be profitable both to themselves and the state. Instead of throwing our money away by sending them out of the country, let us spend it among them and the manufacturers at home.

I have before proved, I think, to the satisfaction of every reasonable person, that any man who quits the country takes away a customer from the manufacturer and the farmer, say to the amount of £20 a year: if this be the fact, the more people you send

away the less demand will there be for the produce of the land, and the labour of those who remain. The diminution in the income will be proportioned to this decrease in demand, and then what becomes of your debts? If my half-pay is not given to me, how am I to employ three servants? carry this through the empire, and you will then acknowledge the truth of my assertion—that when you have sent half a million of people out of the country, half the shops in London would be shut up, and beggary, and despair, and misery, will pervade the empire, from John O’Groat’s house to the Land’s End.

The great secret of employing the poor is to let them work for *themselves*; to set them up with a small advance of capital; to prevent their goods being seized for rent; to see that their time is properly spent in labour and recreation; to educate the youngest children in habits of religion, morality, and useful occupation. The Infant Schools are the first step towards national improvement: these must be superintended by the ladies, and the poor must be encouraged by all means to place their children in these seminaries. The Charity Schools are the next stage;—these are only faulty inasmuch as they do not unite manual labour with mental instruction, and are placed in crowded cities, instead of open and healthy fields: from these establishments, if well attended and

followed up, much good may be expected. The Society for suppressing Juvenile Vagrancy is the next in order. This embraces all the unhappy and friendless boys, who are now picking pockets at your theatres, stealing from your houses, or weeping in your streets:—of these we calculate that there are *fifteen thousand* about the town. The Society for their protection and education is now in its infancy, and, with the blessing of God, will be the means of rescuing these poor lads from the destruction which seems impending over them, and, through their instrumentality, over the whole of society;—for it is a self-evident proposition, that to eradicate vice, and introduce habits of industry among the lower orders, we must begin with them in early life, before they acquire the taste for those indulgences which ever after guide them in their worldly course, and at length, by their power and their numbers, overthrow all order and government. The last and grand movement of all, is agricultural labour for the poor generally,—and this brings me to your challenge in the Times of the 20th Inst. viz.—How to prevent the home colonists throwing their labour upon the home-market? To this you demand an explicit answer, and you shall have it. Were all the land in this country now under cultivation, dressed as it ought to be, it would occupy every man and

woman now out of employ, and every child too,*—and the land would produce at least as much again as it does now: but if to this we add all the waste land capable of improvement, and were to set our labourers to work upon it, we shall find that we have not sufficient hands to improve the country. We want more corn, more cattle, more sheep, more hemp, more flax, more eggs, poultry, butter, cheese, bacon, and fruit:—now all these things may be produced by land, labour, and capital; and no one shall persuade me that the man who is capable of producing these things in Canada, will not be able to produce them in England, in Ireland, in Scotland. To say that the land here is poor, and that it is not in Canada, is not sense: the land in America will be worn out for want of manure; and in this country it will be improved by the constant application of it. To this mode of employment I know but of two classes of objectors: the first are those who wish to keep up the price of farm-produce; the second, those who have land in the colonies. These gentlemen I leave to their own remedies, and shall not waste my time in talking to them: indeed, I saw quite enough of the latter class at the Horticultural Office in June last—(see my letter in the *Morning Post*, June 18th, 1830.)

* Every child from two years of age to fourteen, should either be at school or at work.

I now come to your correspondence with the members of the class in the Mechanic's Institute. I pass over your first, second, third, and fourth resolutions without any remark: by the fifth, I presume you mean that "well-regulated *emigration*, assisted and conducted on sound principles, like those already acted upon," would at once remove all your "*redundant*" hands; I must therefore beg to ask how this emigration is to be "*regulated*,"—whether you propose to locate "the redundant hands" on land already *occupied*, but *not peopled*, or whether you will send them to make new settlements altogether? If the first of these plans be your object, then my fears will be justified that selfish views have instigated, not you, but the first promoters of this undertaking; if the latter object be in view, then I contend that it is an adventure, a mere speculation, which in thirty or forty years may bring some return to the descendants of these settlers; but in the mean time certain loss to the Parent State, both of men and capital.

Now, I ask you, what prevents Ireland from being a happy country? I conclude you will answer, want of capital; you may add also, want of confidence: if *we* could have the one she would soon have the other: if men knew that their property was as safe in Kerry as it is in Kent (for I think nothing of the late unhappy disputes) then Ireland would soon have all the capital she wants. What makes land valuable? A desire to improve

it; then if land now laying waste, and worth only five shillings per acre, can be let for ten shillings, and money saved from being spent among our rivals, or thrown away on the seas, is employed in cultivating that land, I contend that he is the best friend to England and Ireland, who brings about this change. What makes a country rich, but the employment of capital in it?—then why divert it from its legitimate channel? Advance capital to the industrious husbandman, and he not only ceases to be a pauper, but becomes a taxpayer. Send a million of these out of the country, and they become contributors to the taxes of their new State, leaving you with double the burthen, and only half the means to pay: and this is the way the “members of the class” intend to “banish poverty and wretchedness from the cottage of the humble labourer,”—about as good as locking the door, and throwing the key into the river.

Your sixth resolution is most extraordinary: it begins by saying “that the humanity of the measure is unquestionable, because the voluntary location of industrious and able-bodied labourers on a fertile soil, in a *healthy* climate, in any of the colonies, is preferable to the involuntary idleness, poverty, and degradation of the pauperised labourers of the United Kingdom.” You mean to transport, at an enormous, nay, even a ruinous expense, the able-bodied and industrious: do you not think they could be better employed in this country? and

do you not think, since we are “to pay the piper,” that we should keep the best for ourselves, and give the worst to our neighbours? If a poor industrious man was settled on Warley or Finchley Commons, in Epping Forest, on Shooter’s Hill, or Epsom Downs, or even in the deserts of Sussex and Hampshire, or on Lord Palmerston’s estate in Ireland, surely they would be more within the reach of friendly aid and supply than in the back woods of America—in Canada—Cape Breton—or Nova Scotia;—not but what these countries may hereafter have their turn, but since “charity begins at home,” let us cultivate our own land first, and then assist our neighbours.

Your seventh and eighth resolutions are merely assumptions without proof, but your ninth comes to the point. You quote the twenty-eighth page of the fourth series of the Causes and Remedies of Pauperism:—how odd that the Select Committee should have found a “*remedy*” for pauperism, and we poor drudges in Mary-le-bone are still going on with our *ten thousand* poor receiving parochial relief,—or one in twelve of the whole population! What a pity it is that we had not long ago been informed of this “remedy,” for, if it be a remedy, it should have been regularly promulgated and made known, and carried into effect to the very letter; and if it be *not* a remedy, then it ought not to have been called one: besides, it is surely presumption to say that an experiment is a

remedy, before it has been tried, and found generally successful. We, in our parish, may safely say that we never heard of your *remedy* as a successful operation, although we have a thousand families who would be glad to be located on waste land, or fixed with a certain capital, in such situations as would enable them for the future to provide for themselves; and as we are to pay for these poor people, may we not, as well, have the choice of disposing of them, more to their own satisfaction, as well as ours? According to your estimate £80,000 must be disbursed: had we not better lay it out in England, among our own people, instead of sending it to enrich our rivals, and *doubly* to impoverish ourselves.

Your tenth, eleventh, and twelfth Resolutions require no comment. Your thirteenth demands a few words: you say that "a permanent redundancy of labouring population, producing such evils, could not exist in any country, where there was an unlimited supply of unoccupied fertile land." Now, I contend, that there is in this country an unlimited supply of unoccupied land, and that to render it *fertile*, would only require one-fourth the expense you propose going to, in order to send the people out of the country, and thus render much more of our land waste and unproductive. Why, Sir, there are upwards of a million of tons of rich manure washed into the

Thames every year, and we are made to drink it up again;—here is manure enough to cover Epping Forest three times over, at thirty tons per acre; here is labour enough for ten thousand men to collect, to cart, and spread this manure. There are the rivers Thames and Medway choaking with mud, and slime, and the richest alluvion, and yet I see but a few convicts here and there, picking up a boat-load in a day, or perhaps a week. There is Portsmouth Harbour, and Langston Harbour, containing thousands of acres of land fit to produce flax and hemp; and while the deep water in the former is filling up, so that *the Victory grounded last winter*, still little or no effort is made either to deepen the anchorage or to reclaim the flats: and this brings your fourteenth Resolution very pat to my purpose. You say that a national effort ought to be made to remove the present *accumulation*; I like the word prodigiously, but you mean *men*, and I mean *mud*:—you say the colonies may supply themselves with labour; why so they would if they wanted it: we have been put to expense enough for them already; if they want hands, let them "come and take them," as the Spartan said. You tell us that the only impediment to the national and spontaneous spread of population is the intervention of the seas,—whereas I contend that the only impediment is the want of capital dealt out liberally to the poor

in this country, on good and solid security, by which they would be enabled to cultivate and improve the land—to produce their food, clothing, and houses, to the lasting improvement of the empire, and to their own temporal and eternal welfare.

In your 15th Resolution you seem to exult in the apparent dilemma into which the objectors have plunged themselves by the “vacuum” being quickly supplied and filled, and all the evils of pauperism reproduced. These, you say, are utterly incompatible with each other; I beg leave to differ with you: if you take 1000 families out of Mary-le-bone—you would, as you have said, select the industrious and willing, and their places would be very shortly supplied by a much worse class, by the idle and the unwilling—so that the vacuum would be filled up, and the same, or more evils of pauperism be reproduced; and this would generally prevail in all large towns, for agriculture would be quitted with the hope of better subsistence without labour, and crowded towns and barrenfields will be our lot. Your 16th Resolution is too fine spun for my plain understanding; to your 17th, I shall only say that machinery will not make soldiers and sailors; and as to the 18th, I differ with your admirers in toto.

In reading your correspondence, there is one observation which strikes me as of the very first im-

portance: I do not see in any part of it the slightest allusion to a Supreme Being, without whose arm kingdoms and empires are no more than the foam of the sea. If your system of emigration is to be conducted without the Bible for its basis, I foretell its ruin. I respect you as a gentleman, and believe that you have the good of your country at heart—I differ with you as to the means: but at any rate, I would throw no impediment in the way of natural emigration; let every man seek his own good, provided it be not at the expense of his neighbour. My object is the happiness of my fellow-creatures, and to promote this end, there is no effort or sacrifice I would not make: I must beg of you, therefore, as a statesman, as a man of talent and experience, to assist me in my labours, which are at this time more than I can well get through. I would readily concur with you in the emigration of *females* who have *not* been imprisoned, or who have been imprisoned for slight offences; if ten thousand of these unhappy creatures could be sent out to New South Wales at the joint expense of the Government and the parishes, I am persuaded it would do more good to the cause of morality, humanity, and the diminution of crime, than any other general means whatever. Could you but see the unprotected creatures that seek admittance to our Workhouse, you would understand the force of this appeal; in New Holland

they would be a treasure—here they are a nuisance to themselves and to the community. In our Workhouse we have a constant supply of female children; in the school there are at present 120. It is in the recollection of one of our most intelligent inspectors, that, 25 years ago, we had no difficulty in providing these children with good masters and mistresses, mostly in the manufactories. I am fully aware of the just prejudice there is against this kind of employment, but when we carefully select only such situations for our children, as we know are good and respectable, we think we ought not to be restricted from placing them within forty miles of London; eligible offers might be made to us at a distance of two miles further, but we are tied up by the Act 56. Geo. III. c. cxxxix. The effect of this Act is to confine the London children to the Capital, for there are no manufacturers nearer than Reading, where few children are required—so that now we have the house full of children, whereas we formerly had very few.

There is one more circumstance connected with the poor, and deeply affecting their interests—I mean the Law of Settlement. To an alteration of this I beg to call your earnest attention, which cuts up the parishes as well as the poor Irish.

I am ready to agree with you that there are too many people out of work, but whose fault is it?—

Certainly not theirs; they would willingly go to work if you would allow them. I spoke to about 300 of our casual poor in the court-yard of the Workhouse early this month. I asked them if they would take spade labour, and they all answered cheerfully in the affirmative, and would gladly take two shillings a day. Most of these men were relieved *with money*, and how much better would it have been if I had had a field for them to dig and plant, or (if the ground were frozen) to carry out manure. Ever since the passing of the law of settlement, in July 1819, 59. Geo. III., commonly called Mr. Sturges Bourne's Act, the Irish have come over to this country in shoals, certain of being conveyed back at the expense of the parishes. From that time till the year 1827, the influx went on gradually increasing, at least in this parish, until the enormous disbursements induced the guardians of the poor to order a separate account to be kept. In January of that year, the sum of £2,270 was paid by the overseers to the casual poor Irish only, not belonging to the parish.

The inspection and investigation then became more particular, and for a while the numbers declined; in the following year they were relieved with only £708. 16s. 6d.; but in 1829 they again increased, and have since continued gradually to do so; as you may perceive by inspecting the tables at our Board-room, of which I have only given an abstract.

This shews the wrong committed on the English and Irish labourer, by the want of a proper system of parochial relief, or employment for the poor, in Ireland; where the industrious man should have as much capital advanced as would build his cottage, and his land should be attached to it, with a lease of not less than ninety-nine years, and a rent equal to the interest of the money advanced, at the rate of five per cent; the tenant being obliged to keep the house in repair, to take no manure off the land, and to be bound to cultivate different crops;—potatoes alone are the ruin of the Irish peasantry: to prove this, let any man look at them, and then cross over into Scotland. If the poor Irish were fairly treated, they would be as good subjects as the Scotch; and so would the English peasantry also; but I have proved in many of my letters now before the public that they have never had *fair play*; for 250 years they flourished under the act of Elizabeth, which empowered magistrates to order the price of labour to be equal to two bushels of wheat; in 1813, that act was repealed, small farms had then been some time out of fashion, and as corn had fetched 105s. a quarter, the greedy landlords engrossed all the waste land to themselves to grow corn. Upwards of 4000 inclosure bills have been passed within these forty years; and having got all the land into their own hands, they obtain a Corn Bill, to keep the people from buying it cheaper in the

foreign market. The only way to match this chicanery, is to enable the poor to raise their own corn, and thus render the corn bill at once a dead letter; to advance the price of labour, and the price of land; to lower the price of all farm produce; to give back to the peasantry the happy days of Sir Roger de Coverley and the Spectator; the plan of emigration which you propose, would produce the very reverse of all this, and realize the sad but beautiful and affecting scene of Goldsmith's Deserted Village.

The weaver, and most other manufacturers, have suffered by the introduction of machinery; but it is hoped the crisis of their distress is gone by, and that the transition from hand labour to machinery is now effected: this is not the case with agriculture; and while we admit the use of the plough, the harrow, and the threshing machine, we should place all the unemployed hands on waste land, with spades, or even with machinery, if it will answer the purpose better; although I am quite certain of the superior advantages of spade husbandry over the plough; and if labour and capital only are required in America, why not let them be employed with infinitely more advantage in this country and in Ireland. When the whole of the land is like the Regent's Park, and we have then a redundant population, I will consent to give up

my plans, but not before. In the mean time, I trust the good sense of the people of England will see the folly and madness of sending away the best of their labourers, and leaving us with the lame, the halt, and the blind, to drag out, for a few years longer, a life of hopeless misery.

Mr. Sylvanus de Vander Weyer says, in his little pamphlet, that if more food were wanted, (in Holland) it would quickly be produced. Now, this is a proposition quite true as it regards one class of society, and equally false as it regards the other: the rich and the middling classes can have food for going to market, because the price is not above their purchase: but when the quartern loaf is at ten-pence, and the poor man's wages a shilling a day, will Mr. Vander Weyer say, that as much bread is produced as may be consumed? Why then, he will say, is not more produced? I answer, for this plain reason,—because they have not the capital to enable them to go to work: and if you will place the means in their hands, they will not only go to work for themselves, and produce this food, but they will at the same time produce their own clothing and houses.

You employ three millions of draft horses in this country, and each horse, it is calculated, requires three acres of land to feed it: but as Mr. Gray of Nottingham very justly observes, if you conducted

your goods and passengers on rail-roads, you would save the labour of horses; and you would add to the labour of man in making those roads; and you would have nine millions of acres to support them. I admit that the manure of three millions of horses is a consideration; but then, in lieu of them, you would have, perhaps, a million of bullocks, and two millions of sheep; all serving as food, clothing, and shoe-leather to the poor, who are now wanting these articles. Can horses or machinery make these roads? no, they must be formed by manual labour in the first place, and machinery will then run upon them. Time is money to all who know the value of it: if it takes me twelve hours to go from London to Bath, and my twelve hours are worth twenty-four shillings to me, and if a rail-road enables me to go there in six hours, I am a gainer of twelve shillings, besides the diminution of fatigue. It seems pretty evident, in the progress of science, that such a road will be established not only to Bath but to every part of the kingdom, and *that they will pay*; but how are these roads to be made if the industrious labourers are sent out of the land? I therefore contend, that whoever is instrumental in this great wrong to England, will have much to answer for. I am certain that you would not willingly injure your country, but your speculations tend alarmingly that way.

There are two machines now being introduced

into general use, which bid fair, under the blessing of divine Providence, to raise Great Britain to the highest state of prosperity; I mean the steam-carriage, and machine for scooping up mud from the beds of rivers and harbours; by the former one hundred tons weight can be drawn, on a level road, at the rate of three miles and a half per hour;* by the latter, from two to four tons of mud per minute may be raised out of the water, from ten to twelve feet deep.† Now, with such wonderful assistance as this from machinery, what may not the labour of man perform? he may produce every comfort; he might live in harmony with his fellow-creatures; he might be at peace with God and man; the whole world might be brought into one bond of union by the rapid interchange of commodities, and thoughts, and kind offices. We might impart the same happiness, by means of steam navigation and learning, to the most distant nations of the earth.

I have supported my views on Home Colonies by the testimony of numerous and very respectable witnesses of modern days; to a person of your extensive knowledge, it would be superfluous to say more: that part of the public on which I wish to make an impression, I mean the industrious lower orders, I must address on a future occasion,

* Mr. Grey of Nottingham.

† See Companion to the Almanack, 1830, p. 247.

unless you, and men like you, will relieve me from the task. I shall, in the first place, lay my foundation on the Bible: I would then exhort all parties to an indissoluble union; then, with capital, labour, and cheerfulness, I would go to work, as if each endeavoured to outstrip his neighbour in doing good. I would furnish them with examples of successful husbandry, and conjugal happiness; at the same time impressing upon their minds the necessity of abstaining from marriage, until a suitable provision was made for a young family; I mean as far as domestic comforts. The neat little cottage, the garden, the bee-hive, the orchard, the poultry, the pig, and perhaps even the cow,—with this stock, let the young family come, and be welcome. The Sunday would then be spent in grateful adoration for the blessings of the week, and the children would sport among the flowers, while the happy parents took their peaceful meal under the fragrant honeysuckle. All this might be achieved, and as much more, if the rich would lend a hand. I will conclude this letter, which I much fear you will think too long, with the reflections of a young Swiss peasant, at the age of sixteen, who had been eleven years in one of those admirable schools in Switzerland, which, it is hoped, will be the model for the education of our juvenile vagrants.

“How” says this amiable youth, “should a Swiss use his liberty? This golden liberty which his ancestors have acquired at the peril of their lives, he should use according to the dictates of his conscience, to its very utmost extent: how unworthy would he prove of that liberty, if, instead of obeying the laws, and turning liberty to the good of his country, he should prostitute it by indiscipline, licentiousness, and crime, how unworthy would he be either of liberty, or of the noble ancestors from whom he is descended. A Swiss is unworthy of the name, who uses his liberty to do evil, who will neither submit to the laws nor listen to remonstrance or instruction, and will only do what is agreeable to himself; a good Swiss should, as far as he can, do any thing for the good of his country, his family, and his fellow-citizens; a faithful Swiss should have the good of his country at heart before his own individual good; he should sacrifice every thing to the good of society, submit to the laws, cheerfully pay all taxes, and let his heart be inflamed with a love of his country. He should cherish all that is good, and contribute readily to every thing which can augment the happiness of his dear native land. Gracious God, let such men be multiplied in my country; may I be reckoned among the number. Then will the Helvetic soil of liberty flourish for ever. One for all—all for

one: let us do good, and this band of heroes will fear nothing; foreign (enemies) will not dare to approach us.”

May this be the political creed of every subject of William the Fourth of England. A great effort must be made by every class of people, but principally among the upper and middling classes. The poor have been neglected, and *it must not be*; they must be more elevated in the scale—I mean the well disposed and industrious; instead of sending them out of the country, we should bind them to us by every tie. As for the vicious and ill-disposed, they must be gently reclaimed, or if that be found impossible, they must be left to the consequences of their own wickedness. But let us set them a proper example by the regular performance of those duties, the neglect of which has, in every instance, preceded the downfall of empires. Let the Sabbath-day be kept holy; let the labouring man have his wages to their fullest extent; let the agricultural labourer have his cottage and his little field at a long lease and low rent, and let no man on any pretence whatsoever have the implements of his trade seized for debt. Some of the most afflicting cases of this sort frequently come before us at the Workhouse, and although many of them may be founded in falsehood, still they always give a pretext for pauperism and beggary. The

parish authorities of St. Mary-le-bone seem determined to take the most effective measures for the better employment of the poor in agricultural and other labours; and I have a sanguine expectation, that we shall, in the course of the spring, establish, not only the Juvenile Vagrant Society on some vacant place at a distance from the metropolis, but also the Rural Asylums for the Parochial Poor. There is now a spirit of enquiry awakened in the country; things must be altered for the better, or they will produce a convulsion. Ireland requires the same benevolent exertions, and her soil and her population will amply repay the expense. If that country is to be left a prey to traitors and demagogues, our exertions in this country will be of little avail, and the influx of casual poor will eat our old parishioners out of the market, and make us all paupers alike. Your emigration plan, even if adopted, would be too slow in its operation, and too extravagant in its execution, to produce any good. It would require 500 sail of ships, of 500 tons each, to convey 10,000 people in common comfort to Canada, at an expense of £400,000. Take the eighth part of that money, build a Rural Asylum, and take a lease of 1000 acres of land, at ten shillings per acre: send any number of able bodied men to work upon it, and be assured, that whatever parish or county does this, under proper

superintendence, will soon find that agriculture, which ever insures permanent employment — and therefore, food and clothing, is superior to manufacture, which is liable to gluts, to crisis, and to want of demand. This plan will supersede the necessity of voluntary emigration of the poor, and forced loans from the rich.

I am, Sir,

Your very obedient Servant,

EDWARD PELHAM BRENTON,

Captain R.N.

18, York Street, Gloucester Place.

APPENDIX.

Irish Casual Poor relieved with Money in the Parish of St. Mary-le-bone.

Date.	Families.	Persons.	Sum.			Sum Total paid each Year.		
			£.	s.	d.	£.	s.	d.
January, 1827	712	1970	98	6	6	2270	15	0
1828	290	916	36	13	0	708	16	6
1829	432	1366	47	12	6	925	5	6
1830	318	1012	35	19	6	852	19	0
1831	445	1422	44	13	6	172	3	1

One Month only.

*These are only the Extracts for the heaviest weeks in January
of each Year, when the numbers run highest.*

POSTSCRIPT.

In the Times newspaper, about the 31st of January, there is a
cock and a bull story about lions and bull dogs, signed "H. Wilson."
—Is the man mad?—He is welcome to abuse me as far as the law
will let him; I can stand any thing but his flummery.

MSH 32727

**END OF
TITLE**